1: Glacken E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 AC7 Okinawa AC7

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An Historical View of the Okinawan Forest

Northern Okinawa is the woodshed of the island, and there is a steady stream of lumber for building, poles for a variety of uses, charcoal, and of small bundles of wood for the people of the south. In the village of Matsuda, the forest is part of the daily life and economic well-being of the people.

Little is known of the past history of the Okinawan forest.

> "Though it is impossible now to determine the nature and distribution of the original forest cover, it seems reasonable that the major part of Okinawa was originally covered by trees. The forest was probably absent from the beaches, a few marsh areas behind the beaches, rock ledges upon which trees could gain a foothold, and perhaps some areas of Regosols (shallow soils) from calcareous clays in the southern part of the island. It is evident that the present forest has been cut over many times. There seems to be no part of the island in which the forest cover has not been disturbed in some way by man."[1]

The virgin stands have disappeared and left few clues, these authors continue, but it is likely that the original forest cover was comparable to the present stands in composition of species. The authors point out the relationship of cutting to settlement. Cutting must have been a continuing process. In Saion's time, in the 18th century, there was considerable tree planting and measures were taken to protect groves of trees for their value as windbreaks. Excessive cutting could hardly have taken place in olden times in the central areas of the north, whose trees, even today, can be reached only by footpath. No doubt in the past cutting has spread out from village sites and travelled roads. Fire may have been one cause of deforestation, as it has been used to clear land. There are still instances of this.

In Okinawa, the period from 1879 to the end of the Russo-Japanese war seems to have been one of widespread deforestation. (This was contemporary also with the reckless deforestation in the New World). The period after 1906 reflected Japanese concern with forest preservation, especially of the nationally owned forests, a program pursued with varying degrees of success.

1 Okinawa forests (U.S. Geological Survey. Mil. Geol. Sect., Office of the Engineer, GHQ, FEC), 1948, 2.

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Conclusion

311 184 In the comparative study of these villages, certain distinctions are worth summarizing. (1) In the southern villages, which lack forest land, there is much more dependence on the uncultivated wild land (genya) which supports the grasses. (2) The forest, in Matsuda as elsewhere in the north, is a reserve for necessities like firewood, thatch, charcoal and building materials, both for local use and southern trade. (3) The shelter belts and groves have been preserved in the north. (4) Tidewater plantings of shelter belts are needed in the south. Plantings of the Ryukyuan Forestry Agency, under American Civil Administration encouragement, have begun in the south as protection from wind and salt water spray damage. These include the mokumao, the pandanus, the hibiscus (Albizzia julibrissum Durazz, in Japanese the nemunoki) and the hirugi (Bruguiera spp.)[12] (5) Ecologically, the situation is more balanced in the north where a good start seems to have been made in arresting progressive deforestation. (6) This balance, if Matsuda is a representative village, can only be maintained by constant appraisal of the relationships of the forest to agriculture, to the growing population, and to the economic demands to which this leads, unless the wood and timber demands of the island are to be met in large part by imports.

[249] [CA7]

114 648 636 An occupying power like the United States, rich in modern techniques, can do much to improve the life of a small island people. If it is mindful of the history and the present features of the culture, it can suggest improvements without destroying the bases on which the culture rests.

313 114 One of its greatest accomplishments could be an aggressive and continuing program of conservation and afforestation. The present administration, through the Forestry Section of the Food and Natural Resources Department, has started a program which, if permanently pursued, could have far-reaching consequences. An emphasis on selective cutting, conservation, fire control, tidewater plantings, and many other measures could only be a credit to American administrators and foresters as well. The costs, as such things go, would be moderate.

From personal experience in village life, I have no doubt that the co-operation of villagers in all parts of the island could be readily obtained in advancing a large scale afforestation program. The readiness of the people of Matsuda cannot be an exception. These things could be accomplished without an unwieldy administrative apparatus. I have been continually struck with the ability of the Okinawans, with their skill in local organization, to accomplish

12 I am indebted to Mr. Richard Varney of the Department of Food and Natural Resources, USCAR, for this information.

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Taira

storing and are kept under the house or on a special shelf on the rafters. Onions, giant radishes, beans, and cabbages are also raised on farm lands. Night soil is rarely used for such vegetables nowadays but is still used on potatoes. Several of these vegetables as well as others are raised by women in small "home-garden" plots.

The hardest working period during the year is in July and August. Within a few weeks after the rice harvest, the soil must be made ready for the second rice crop or the soil must be prepared for dry paddy potatoes. This is also the time for planting the chief sugar crop. All this takes place during the hottest time of the year, when efficiency is greatly reduced by heat and humidity.

Sugar harvest and processing fall in the period between January and March. One field after another is harvested by the owners after arrangements have been made for a date when the cane can be processed. Such arrangements are made with the director of the Taira cooperative, who supervises operations of the sugar mill which is owned by the cooperative. The whole family helps on the day of processing. Women carry bundles of branches and light firewood to heat the kettles. The operation requires the help of someone to feed cane into the small, diesel engine driven press, some to carry the pulp away, and others to watch the kettles in which extracted juice is boiled down to molasses. Finally, a few persons stir the brown residue in wide, open pots until it becomes stalted. Then it is put into tubs that hold about 132 pounds.

The agricultural market for cash crops was totally disrupted at the end of World War II. There was no immediate outlet for sugar products; crops had been destroyed or neglected, and the sugar mill was demolished in the fighting. But by this time most people were too satisfied with the great returns from forest work to invest much time and energy in a crop which takes a year and a half to show any material results. Nevertheless, sugar was the first crop to find a market again.

Pineapple, introduced recently in Taira, has a promising future. Tea is still grown in small quantities, but few families grow more than they need for their own use, although it is a good potential cash crop for this area.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Raising pigs is an important source of cash income for all households in the village. Even the poorest families own at least one, but few families have more than two; in the central village the average is about 1.2 per household. Pigs are given special care and attention.

653 dren under 3 years, every adult past school age, male or female, is re-
[464] quired to work on community projects if called by the village head. Officials may pay the village for exemption from this duty. There are two kinds of community corvées, those in which every adult and qualified member of a household has to participate, and those in which only one household representative is required to attend. As many as 12 days a year may be spent by each villager on road construction, clearing of village land, improvement of village-owned tea fields, or in similar projects. In some cases, where the central government has granted support, this work may be compensated by a small payment. More often, however, it is a free contribution to the village effort.

474 The strength of deeply rooted cooperative behavior seems to have been an essential factor in introducing formal cooperatives successfully in this area. The northern village of Oku is credited with being the first community in Kunigami province to organize a cooperative store in 1906. Initiative for this organization was provided through the Japanese administration. Taira was the first village in present-day Higashi township to establish a cooperative. In 1918 the village was poverty stricken, and village leaders, the president of the Young People's Association, one of the teachers, and others, made a study of the Oku organization. They then convinced the Taira headman of the great possibilities. Over the years the Taira cooperative supported by the majority of Tairan households, through buying of mountain products, marketing, running the store, and sugar production, tried to improve the village economy. One immediate result was that the indebtedness to money lenders from outside the village, especially to the owners of sailing junks which transported mountain products south, could be avoided. Up until the war the cooperative flourished and improved economy.

The end of the war found the village cooperative totally defunct, and it took several years to restore the organization. At present it owns the store, the sugar mill, and the truck. It also controls the use of the
● [245] village-owned tea fields in which everybody has the right to grow at least one row of tea bushes.

474 Shares in the cooperative are held by households, and almost every-
621 one in Taira is a member. The two directors and several officers are elected by shareholders. Actually the directorship does not change often, and the most influential leaders usually hold the office. They may initiate measures which will aid the village economy, but they have no absolute power: a check and balance system protects the people. As one person put it, "It is always necessary to have a few persons outside the business so that they can check what is going on. If people of the

313 Home Industries and Famous Products The forested northern mountains give rise to small scale lumbering, charcoal making, 314 and firewood gathering. Kunigami-son and Kushi-son emphasize the gathering of 433 bamboo and firewood. On the other hand the making of charcoal is more important in Nago, Haneji, and Ōgimi. The urbanization of the south combined with [369] [391] the postwar extension of roads into formerly inaccessible parts of the north have accelerated exploitation of the northern forest resource. Particularly heavy is the demand for long roof poles, or kichigwā, after every major typhoon. [237] Kunigami-son and Higashi supply the bulk of these. Where wood is plentiful behind a coastal road, one often finds lime kilns, which process the coral of the reefs.

258 The sea is also a major source of material for home industries. Sea 433 salt is made at Yagaji, Urasoe and Oroku on the west coast, at Henza and Awase [237] on the east. Kunigami-son prides itself upon its production of seaweed. Buttons from seashells are made in Mawashi. Fish cakes ('kamaboko') are made in quantity in Itoman and Naha, with lesser amounts being produced in Ishikawa and Nago. Dried bonito ('katsuoboshi') is a specialty of Tonaki isle to the west. Motobu-chō holds second place, followed by the western isles of Tokashiki and 505 Zamami. For over a hundred years the small cargo sailboats ('Yambaru-sen') 178 of the east coast have carried forest products from the north. The extension of roads into the northern forests has greatly reduced the amount now carried by sea.

433 Horse breeding is a specialty in Nakazato (the eastern half of Kume- [232] shima), which has 22% of the gunto's production of horses. However, the pro- [283] duction of horse and cattle hides is concentrated in the urban areas, which account for 84% of the hides produced. Nakazato is also famous for production [231] of silk cocoons, being responsible for about two-fifths (38.7%) of the gunto's total. The leading mainland producer is Motobu-chō, with 9%.

Although Okinawa is not self-sufficient in tea, the three areas of [245] Gushikawa, Ishikawa and Kunigami produce over half of the local tea. In Oku 478 village of Kunigami, the tea factory is a cooperative venture. Gushikawa 377 and Chatan pride themselves upon possessing 'sake' and 'awamori' distilleries. [284] Mawashi is the center of production of farm tools, and accounts for some weaving of banana cloth. Weaving of mats from the "seven isles reed" ('shichitō-i') is a local specialty of Kanegusuku.

[314] Travertine quarries are found in Motobu-chō and Katsuren. A sandy limestone is quarried at Minatogawa in Gushichan.